

public services (as a barrier to multitype participation), and competition arising from commercialization of the Internet.

On a policy level, lack of statewide coordination was noted as the greatest barrier. Lack of policy influence/involvement and perceived low political visibility of the library community in the mix of network activity in the state were also noted.

Issues and Consultant Observations

Many perceived barriers to statewide networking are identified in this report. Some of the barriers are currently being addressed by the State Library. Focus group opinions suggest that the State Library should publicize what it is doing to address many or all of the barriers identified.

5) Comparison to Other States

Key Findings

A review of other statewide library networking efforts revealed that the relative success of each state's efforts depended primarily, if not exclusively, on environmental variables within the state. Examples include existing infrastructure, the number and kinds of vendors, politics, and the history of previous library service integration in the state. In sum, states were not directly comparable.

All state efforts, however, may offer features that might serve as models for portions of North Carolina's future network services. New York's Government Information Locator Service and several state efforts to include rural libraries and users are features which may be instructive examples for North Carolina efforts.

Issues and Consultant Observations

A common theme in this report is the critical problem of providing networked information services to rural/frontier libraries and citizens. Of all the areas of comparison to other states, this is an area in which all states share difficulty. The State Library should consider an emphasis on researching other state rural network access efforts and the development of a plan which brings North Carolina once again to the forefront on this issue.

6) Role of the State Library

Key Findings

The role(s) the State Library could play in the future of information networking was a topic that came up in every discussion, before the question itself was asked. The ten top roles suggested were: